



PRESS RELEASE

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USAID Launches New Project to Support Afghanistan's Land Management System

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN | JUNE 8, 2011 — Today, U.S. Ambassador Karl W. Eikenberry announced a new USAID project which will aid in the reform and build upon the improvements of Afghanistan's land management systems. The three-year Land Reform in Afghanistan (LARA) project will build the capacity of Afghan Government institutions involved in land management to provide land-related services to the Afghan private and public sectors.

The launch of the new \$41.8 million project brings together representatives from the Afghan government and the private sector to discuss land management reform and formalization in Afghanistan. Speaking at the launch, Ambassador Eikenberry emphasized the importance of a formalized and robust Afghan-owned and managed land market in driving economic growth and investment. He said, "This investment and joint project will contribute to strong and sustainable public and private land sectors and provide easy access to investment properties for the private sector. It will also pave the way for business growth and job creation, and help move Afghanistan toward economic prosperity."

After decades of conflict, Afghanistan's land management system is governed by overlapping and sometimes conflicting legal systems, which creates confusion. Estimates suggest that up to 85 percent of all property transactions are informal and 70 percent of all urban real estate is unregistered, a significant deterrent to attracting the long-term investments in residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural real estate that are required for robust economic growth.

Addressing the audience, Minister of Finance H.E. Omar Zakhilwal stated, "Land is vital for development. Land reform and development of land market framework creates an environment conducive to economic growth, creation of employment, peace and stability." Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock H.E. Mohammad Asif Rahimi added, "The development of a proper land management system is important and highly required for Afghan farmers, agribusinesses and all citizens. I am delighted for the LARA project which is to provide assistance on the development of a sustainable land management system in Afghanistan."

Through LARA, USAID will also work with Afghan government and private sector institutions to formalize urban planning and land dispute resolution legislation, implement improvements in infrastructure in informal settlements, build community capacity to resolve land disputes, increase property title security, and automate land record administration. USAID will also strengthen Afghan capacity to design, manage, and implement needed land tenure reform.

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